

## **DETERMINANTS OF THE USE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN ENHANCING EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In response to global business challenges and competitions, most organizations have now re-energized their efforts towards enhancing employee performance and productivity. One initiative that can be used to revolutionize employee performance at the work place is Emotional Intelligence. Understanding employees' emotional intelligence is important because it assists the management attract, retain and reward excellent employees which ultimately increases productivity and success. The study used both qualitative and quantitative approaches in its data collection using an exploratory survey technique. The research instruments used were questionnaire, structured interview and observation. A stratified random sample of 120 employees was drawn from a population of 1048 in Nakuru County. According to the findings, a strong relationship exists between the key variables and employee performance. Regression analysis indicated a linear relationship that respondents with higher levels of education tended to appreciate teamwork as a means of relationship management, hence more committed to work. The study concluded that intrapersonal, adaptability, interpersonal and stress management also play a key role in the enhancement of employee performance.

**KEYWORDS:** Emotional Intelligence, Transformational Leadership, Employee Performance

### **INTRODUCTION**

Employee performance has been viewed as a critical component in most successful organizations due to prevailing stiff competition from other organizations globally. The increase in competition and the need for competitive advantage has made most organizations re-evaluate the way they make use of their human resource. In such organizations, the way employees perceive and interact with one another has a lot of impact on the success of organizational performance. The ability to harness emotions, in order to facilitate various cognitive activities, such as thinking, problem solving, self-management and appreciating complicated relationships among employees is what Emotional Intelligence(EI) is concerned with (Mayer, *et al.*, 2009). At workplace, EI consists of five parameters namely self-awareness, emotional management, self-motivation, relationship management and emotional coaching. It is a subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate amongst them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions (Salovey, 2006).

Robbins (2007), outlined the various ways in which EI affects an employee. He noted that EI can help one navigate the social complexities of the workplace, lead, motivate others, and excel in their career. When it comes to gauging job candidates, many companies now view EI as being as important as technical ability. EI also affects an employee's health. When one is unable to manage stress level well, it can lead to serious health problems. The first step to improving EI is to learn how to relieve stress. Uncontrolled stress can also affect ones mental health, making him

vulnerable to anxiety and depression. Emotional Intelligence is increasingly becoming relevant to organizational development and developing of employees. This is because it provides a new way to understand and assess people's behavior, management styles, employee's attitude, interpersonal skills and potential. It is an important consideration of human resource planning, job profiling, recruitment, interviewing and selection, management development, customer relations and employee relations (Allan, 2004). By developing EI at workplace, both employees and organizations can become more productive and successful. The process and outcome of EI development also elicit several elements that are known to reduce stress and burnout for employees. Ultimately, it decreases conflict, improves relationships, understanding and stability, plus continuity and harmony within the organization (Howard, 2004).

Local counties play a crucial role in enhancing socioeconomic development in Kenya. *The Local Government Act, CAP 256 of the Laws of Kenya*, stipulates the mandate of Local counties, which include provision of basic essential services such as water, business infrastructure such as market stalls, health facilities, education and other economic activities through control and planning. Local counties provide platforms for productivity, entrepreneurship and economic modernization, poverty reduction and practicing ground for good governance. It therefore, means that activities of local counties directly affect the livelihood of their inhabitants and therefore, define their economic significance. Local counties, in their quest to discharge their mandate as part of the public sector reforms, have endeavored to provide value to the citizenry through sourcing of human resource that has the relevant physical and mental capability to perform (Menkevld & Cobbett, 2011). Local counties have emerged as leading employers in their respective areas of jurisdiction. The number of services being offered has grown exponentially and therefore the need to hire competent employees to provide the services to the people.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The desire to enhance service delivery and customer care in most public offices in Kenya has made most organizations come up with new strategies and approaches in carrying out its activities and more so, optimum use of the available human resource (Latham, 2007). In Kenya, the core functions of municipal and county councils have been identified as development of infrastructure, garbage collection, environmental protection and conservation, provision of sewerage and drainage services, approval of development plans, licensing, market development and health and education services. The other emerging core service has been collection of parking fee from vehicles within urban areas. Provision of all these services requires a highly committed workforce, that is physically and mentally fit and up to the task. One possible management intervention is an understanding of the personality and emotions of its employees, a strategy called Emotional Intelligence. Application of EI and its determinants enables employees to manage or reduce stress, recognize and manage emotions, enhance the ability to connect with others and ultimately improve productivity (Lewis, 2004). The study, therefore, was designed to determine how learned Emotional Intelligence capabilities are being used to develop and achieve outstanding employee performance.

## RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The study sought to prove the following hypothesis:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant correlation between self- awareness and employee performance in Nakuru County.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no discernible pattern in the role played by self-management and employee's work adaptability.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Social awareness has no significant influence on interpersonal relationship amongst employees.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** Relationship management does not play any significant role in managing employee's performance.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Self- Awareness**

Self- Awareness is about turning into oneself senses, getting in touch with one's feelings and knowing oneself (Locke, 2003). It is about being able to connect ones emotions- having a moment-to-moment awareness of your emotions and having an understanding of how they influence ones thoughts and actions. According to Rodgers (2000), individual's behavior is greatly influenced by one's self-awareness. He believed that when one is growing up, he knows what is good for him and as he or she matures, the environment sets standards which he called conditions of worth hence tends to regulate peoples personality. Burke (2008), reported that people with high EI are usually very self-aware. They understand their emotions, and because of this, they do not let their feelings rule them. Erez (2006), identified a number of factors that one may use to shape up self- awareness: Firstly, is viewing one's behavior in comparison with a reference group, whereby, people keep on evaluating themselves in relation to others, secondly, are the conditions of worth in the society, whereby everyone wants to be good to meet the set out standards and thirdly, is feedback from other people especially those people who are important to the individual. Lastly, cultural guidelines also play a role in shaping ones self- awareness.

Latham (2007) described the various strategies one would use to build up an individual's self-awareness. The first one being able to recognize that every person controls oneself image, which means that one has the power to change his own image, he can listen to feedback from others but he does not have to agree with any. The other strategy is the idea of setting realistic goals and avoiding to be too demanding to oneself. According to Bantan (2003), an employee with a self- awareness trait in most cases assesses organizational needs and makes self-judgment before engaging in any productive activity. He further says that such individuals encourages insights, provides opportunities for practice, gives feedback and are self- directed to organizational change. At the county level therefore, successful employees need to be able to accurately understand their motivations, desires and values in order to empathize with others' needs. Knowledge about self- awareness will help employees assess themselves; understand where one is and ones' current reality.

### **Self- Management**

Self- management is regarded as the ability to control impulsive feelings and behavior, manage one's emotions in healthy ways, and take initiative, follow through on commitments, and adapt to changing circumstances (Rodgers, 2000). It is the ability to regulate distressing affects like anxiety and anger and to inhibit emotional impulsivity. He further noted that those employees who have the ability to manage their own stress and stay unaffected emotionally, have the most committed competency to productivity. Belkins (2003) noted stress and burnout as being the major issues at the workplace that call for a sober approach on self-management. Cole (2002), provided a list of actions that relates self-management to stress management. He pointed out that employees put themselves under time pressure by leaving everything until the last minute. He further noted that there is a close relation between self-management and stress management. Adaptability is another single competence in relation to self-management since senior performers in management positions ranks exhibits it (Spencer& Spencer, 2000). A landmark work of McClelland (1999) established Achievement Orientation as the competence that drives the success of employees in their workplace. In its most general sense, the competence parameter,

referred to as Achievement Drive, is concerned with rating employees' levels of self management, taking into account their classic achievement, oriented behavior, taking of calculated risks, and the supporting of the organization's innovations. Spencer and Spencer (2000) found out that, the need to achieve is the competency that most strongly sets apart superior and average performers within the organization. They further suggested that, optimism is a major ingredient of achievement because it can determine one's reaction to unfavorable events or circumstances.

### **Social Awareness**

Petrides and Furnham (2001), reported social awareness to be the ability to sense, understand and react according to the environment. According to them, the social awareness cluster manifests in three competencies: the empathy competence gives people an astute awareness of others' emotion, concerns and needs. Empathy requires self- awareness, which means understanding of others' feelings and concerns flows from awareness of one's own feelings. The ability to read others' needs well comes naturally to the best managers of product development teams (Spencer & Spencer, 2000). The empathy competence allows individuals to accurately and avoids resorting to the stereotyping that can lead to performance deficits by creating anxiety in the stereotyped individual (Steel, 1997). Social awareness also plays a key role in the service competence, the ability to identify a client's or customer's often unstated needs and concerns and then match them to products or services; this empathetic strategy distinguishes star sales performers from average ones (Spencer & Spencer, 2000). It also means taking a long-term perspective; sometimes trading off immediate gains in order to steer the customer toward a choice that satisfied both the customer's and the vendor's needs (McBane, 1995).

### **Relationship Management**

Relationship management hinges on one's ability to attune or influence the emotions of another person. The ability in turn builds on other domains of emotional intelligence, particularly self- management and social awareness. If one is not able to control emotional outburst or impulses and lack empathy, there is less chance of establishing effective work relationships (Sweeney, 2000). The relationship management set of competencies includes essential social skills, developing others involves sensing people's developmental needs and bolstering their abilities; a talent not just of excellent coaches and mentors, but also outstanding leaders. Competence in developing others is a hallmark of senior managers, among the other managers. Although the ability is vital for that managing front- line work, it has also emerged as a crucial skill for effective leadership at high levels (Goleman, 2003). The most effective people sense others' reactions and fine- tune their own responses to move interaction in the best direction. The competency emerges repeatedly as a hallmark of star performers particularly among supervisors, managers and executives (Spencer& Spencer, 2000).

Data on managers and executives show that better people can execute the competence, the more others prefer to deal with them (Walter, 2003). He viewed them as a range of mechanisms, which enable and at all times empower employees directly and indirectly to contribute to decision making in the organization. Sosisk and Megerian (1999), suggested that people with an understanding of relationship management foster open communication. Goleman (2003) noted a number of challenges that may influence effective management at workplace. The first was the challenge to gain insight into the changing psychological contract at work, the way in which it is formed, the things that lead to a breach or violation of psychological contract, the consequences of doing this, and the extent to which psychological contract change is a manageable process. The second challenge is to consider what is really meant by flexibility at work. Employees need to understand the patterns of continuity and the change process in the employment relationship. The third challenge is to consider whether the employees have a social climate in organization that makes the management of a changing

psychological contract a feasible objective or not. Employees need to determine the social climate within which the employment relationship exists, and the social exchanges on which the relationship is founded. Harrison (2008), suggested that employees with high emotional intelligence have a high degree of participation. He sees employee participation as a fundamental democratic right for workers to extend degree of control over managerial decision making in an organization.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study utilized both qualitative and quantitative approaches in data collection. The study was carried out in Nakuru County and the unit of study was employees who directly provide service to Nakuru residents. The county has a total labor force of 1048 employees. The sample frame was drawn from employees of the five sub counties that make up the larger Nakuru County. The researcher adopted stratified random sampling because the population of interest was homogeneous hence the need to draw a representative sample. Although the researcher sent 190 questionnaires, only 158 were returned and those that had been correctly filled and therefore used in the data analysis were 150 represented a return rate of 83.2%. The sampling technique that was used for the study was a combination of multi- stage and simple random sampling. Data was collected, coded, organized and analyzed. For effective data analysis, the researcher made use of statistical software package.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Emotional Intelligence was measured by use of a Likert Scale with five key points based on the objectives of the study. The mean of self-awareness ranged from 4.3 on self-confidence to 3.6 on emotional awareness.

### **Demographics of the Respondents**

The study established that majority of the respondents 45% were of the age group 41-50 years. 3.3% were of the age above 51. The trend provided a clear indication that the age of respondents ranged from 20 to 60 years. According to the findings of the study, 56.7% of the respondents were male while female formed 43.3%. The trend may be attributed to structures of employment inherited from the colonial masters that were in place before and even after independence, where males were give an upper hand in public offices. Information about age and gender was important to the study since the study provided an insight of the relationship between the various age groups and levels of emotional attachment to work. Emotions, according to Bantan (2003), are a way of behaviour, considered as abstracts, which are enhanced as one matures in age. It was, therefore, important to have an understanding of the age group of the employees of Nakuru County since; there exist a correlation between ones age and his or her attitude and feelings to work.

### **Self- Awareness**

The findings indicated that 56% of the employees see their self- awareness and self-worth as a bigger contributor to their work performance. Majority of the respondents strongly agreed that they understand their self- awareness capabilities, while less than 2% did not seem to understand. Some of the reasons attributed to this trend may have been that most of the respondents are left on their own to draw their own work plans based on the individual's capabilities. 64% of the respondents said they usually accomplish their daily work while, 30% said they usually do not. For employee to perform, they need motivation that enhances their morale. In most cases, promotion was not based on individual performance and hence most of the hard working employees were not recognized hence felt demotivated. Most of the workers who worked for overtime were compensated by being given off duty rest days. 38% of the respondents said that

they do not have a mechanism in place to measure the completeness of their work hence were not able to respond to the question. According to 38% of the respondents, self-awareness directly affects employee performance. High performers at the Nakuru County have a high degree of self-awareness, which is highly linked to the values and goals of the County. Similarly, 63% of the respondents were in strong agreement that people with self-awareness have a high level of self-assurance; while a mere, 2% strongly disagreed with the statement. This is because employees with self-awareness traits are decisive, are able to make sound decisions and have the confidence in their work. The research findings provide a strong relationship between work completion rates with mode of reward.

Majority of the respondents in nearly all the departments in Nakuru County understand their self-awareness capability. 44% of the respondents strongly agree of acknowledging their self-awareness. When asked whether self-awareness affect their work performance, 33.3% slightly agree while 7.5% slightly disagreed with the statement. Although the issue of organizational values and goals play an important role in the management of all the organizations, still 37.5% of the respondents strongly disagree with the statement; self-awareness is linked to values and goals of the county. The Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation was used to determine the degree of association between self-awareness and employee performance. Comparing the computed and table value:  $r_{\text{calculated}} = 0.94 \geq 0.65$ . Since the calculated value is greater than the table Value,  $H_0$  is rejected and it is concluded that there is a significant correlation between self-awareness and employee performance. This shows that recognition of emotions and their effect on self and others is linked to employees perceiving that they are appreciated and rewarded for doing a good job so that they take pride in their work and put in more effort when needed.

### **Self- Management**

58% of the respondents acknowledged being given the feedback while 42% responded that there was no feedback given. Among those who receive feedback for their work, 91% experience discrete feelings and emotions if their feedback does not measure to their expectations. This is a clear manifestation of the attitude and self- picture that respondents bring into their relationships at the workplace. Findings of the study indicate that both the male and female respondents in all the sub- counties of Nakuru undergo discrete feelings and emotions and this directly affects their work performance and job satisfaction. Levels of self- management and employee performance have been linked by the study to absenteeism, lateness to work and discrete feelings about work itself. Most of the employees appreciate self-management initiative. Among the respondents, 58.3%, strongly agree that people with self-management are able to manage disruptive emotions while a mere 2.5% strongly disagree. In all the sub-counties, a majority of the respondents appreciate self- management as a means to stress tolerance. A majority of 69% always stay composed and positive with self-managed initiatives. While responding to issues related to trust- building, 62% of the respondents feel that one builds trust in his/her work through self-management and more so, take responsibility for personal performance. Teamwork and companionship was identified as key in the enhancement of self- management initiatives. People with this type of trait were known to be team players and willing to assist others performs their tasks. Such people keep and concentrate on the assigned tasks and are willing to accomplish the assigned duties with minimum supervision. Hypothesis was tested using the Z – Test statistic and the level of significance used was  $\alpha = 0.05$ . Since the calculated value is greater than the table value,  $H_0$  is rejected and it was concluded that self-management enhances employee performance.

### **Social Awareness**

The findings indicated that social awareness is a derivative of teamwork. 57% of the respondents strongly agree

that teamwork is in place and it has received the support of the management and all the staff members of the sub-counties. Some of the key areas where teamwork was evident were when coming up with departmental objectives, during staff welfare functions and training. According to 45% of the respondents, teams are formed so that the respondents could come up with departmental targets and objectives. Other areas that call for teamwork include while carrying out daily routine work and during social welfare times. While drawing the annual budget for each department, teamwork was also being applied. 64% of the respondents said that teamwork has been in place, in their respective departments although in some areas, the spirit of teamwork faces a number of challenges. According to 92% of the respondents, team members derive a lot of satisfaction, being members of the team. They also feel secure and through teams, members are informed of their current happenings and hence remain socially aware. Over 60% of the respondents strongly agree that people with social awareness are attentive to emotions and listen well, while less than 1% strongly disagree with the statement. The reason for this would be that emotions are a conscious experience involving participative feelings, physiological arousal, expressive reactions and observable activities related to work. The effect of social awareness was examined by computing the correlations. It was found to be positively significant at a 0.01 level of significance on employee performance. Work itself and the working environment had a 0.7 correlation factor, which clearly indicated that there exists a strong relationship between social awareness and employee performance. Inspiring others to work together towards common goals was perceived to be linked to employee clearly seeing how the county governments' overall goal. Working cooperatively, to be part of a team was perceived to be linked to support from departmental supervisors and the running of their day to day activities well, without having to waste time and thereby improving employee performance. Since the calculated value was found to be greater than the table value, the null hypothesis,  $H_0$ , was rejected and hence concluded that social awareness has a significant influence on employee performance in Nakuru County. Reasons attributed to this outcome could be that most respondents have the ability to demonstrate themselves as cooperative, contributing and constructive members of their social groups. At the sub-county level, therefore, this ability involves acting in a responsible manner, even though either one may not benefit personally, the individual takes on community-oriented or organizational based responsibilities.

### **Relationship Management**

Majority of the respondents (68%) strongly agree with the fact that, for any good work relationship to prevail there must be a way of fostering open communication. Through such initiative, guidance of performance of other employees has to be enhanced. 65% of the respondents hold the view that relationship management is actually beneficial to both the employees and the employer of any organization since it nurtures collaboration among the employees. It was also reported that, there is a lot of co-operation while working in teams since it acts as an avenue for improving partnerships at the workplace. There is a clear indication from the respondents at 69%, that a strong working network improves organizational performances and enhances quality decision-making. This is due to a number of views put on board and the diversity of ideas presented during official interaction. A good working relationship within the sub-counties also, ensures that employees understand that they have the moral responsibility for the direction and outcome of the team. While responding to the case as to whether people with relationship management traits foster open communication, over 77% strongly agreed to the case while less than 1% strongly disagreed. This clearly demonstrates that respondents appreciate the significance of open communication. Determining the impact of relationship management on employee performance indicated that open communication plays a major role in fostering performance. This shows the perception that keeping impulsive feelings under control and restraining negative actions when under pressure is linked to employee feelings that directly influence employee's output and level of motivation to work.

Effective open communication in this case was seen as an integral part of working relationship since; it is only through open communication that employees can make themselves understood by the management and other employees. The findings, therefore, indicate that communication is essential for employee performance. Effective and efficient communication result in better overall organizational performance. Encouraging open communication will assist the employees of the sub-counties establish and disseminate the goals and objectives of the county, develop plans for their achievement, organize the human and non human resources, select, develop and appraise staff and even control their performance. 66% of the respondents strongly agree that those people with a good relationship management have the ability to guide the performance of others while less than 1% strongly disagreed with the statement. The findings indicated that people with relationship management seek out relationships that are mutually beneficial to others as well. Employees of Nakuru County can maximize on this trait by guiding the performance of others while holding them accountable for their actions and more so, modeling the change expected of others. According to 73% of the respondents, people with relationship management recognize the need for change and removes barriers to change while less than 2% strongly disagree with the case. The current restructuring of the county governments in Kenya calls for transformational change. This can only be realized when employees of Nakuru county can champion for the change and enlist others in its pursuit, build rapport and keeping others in the loop and maintaining personal friendships among work associates. When asked about nurturing collaboration among employees, over 73% of the respondents strongly agreed that people with relationship management cultivate and maintain extensive both formal and informal networks, while less than 1% strongly disagree. Among the employees of Nakuru County, employees collaborate through the sharing of resources, information, and nurture opportunities for collaboration. Through collaborations, employees are able to build team identity, esprit de corps and be committed to the relationship. Since the test was to determine whether the two variables of relationship management and employee performance are related, the Chi- Square Test was the most appropriate at a level of significance of  $\alpha = 0.05$ . Since the calculated value is less than the table value,  $H_0$  is accepted and conclusion made that there exist a significant relationship between relationship management and employee performance for employees in Nakuru County. Reasons attributed to the degree of the relationship depend largely to the spirit of teamwork and team building among the employees of the Nakuru County.

### **Employee Performance and Transformational Leadership**

The extraction method used was principal Component Analysis and the Rotation Method employed was Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. The rotation converged in five iterations for EI with 9 variables remaining out of 16. There was no iteration for Transformational Leadership because only one component was extracted however; EI had three iterations resulting in 8 variables from 12. 34 strong variables remained in total out of 43 after carrying out factor analysis as shown in Table 1. From the findings, most of the emotional intelligence competencies were significantly correlated to the transformational leadership. The self-awareness competency correlated with transformational leadership except in the statement that employees are treated as individuals, their views and ideas are sought, and contributions valued of idealized influence. It is worth nothing that employee's encouragement to achieve the university mission correlated with all the attributes of self-management. The social awareness competencies significantly correlated with transformational leadership at both 0.01 and 0.05 level of significance.



Table 1: Component of EI and Transformational Leadership

	Idealized Influence	Idealized Influence	Inspiration Leadership	Inspiration Leadership	Intellectual Stimulation	Intellectual Stimulation	Individual Consideration	Individual Consideration
<b>Self Awareness</b>								
Emotional self-awareness	.163**	.076	.079	.097*	.096*	.173**	.125**	.12*
Accurate self-awareness	.121**	.074	.115*	.107*	.073	.106*	.038	.074
Self Confidence	.057	-.052	.111*	.006	-.034	.076	-.020	-.026
<b>Self Management</b>								
Self Control	.101*	.073	.097*	.094*	.077	.178**	.055	.014
Trustworthy & Conscientiousness	.097*	-.015	.132**	.055	-.063	.133**	.031	.000
Adaptability	.020	.045	.060	-.046	-.0032	.045	-.020	-.032
Optimism	.026	.015	.146**	.062	-.010	.051	.044	.029
Initiative	.115	-.012	.145**	.049	.004	.085	.079	.059
<b>Achievement drive</b>	0.38	-.053	.098*	-.030	-.035	.030	.034	.001
<b>Social Awareness</b>								
Empathy & Service Orientation	.095*	.062	.149**	.042	-.004	.113*	.057	.079
Organizational awareness	.064	.169**	.104*	.129**	.237**	.099	.145**	.229*
<b>Relationship Management</b>								
Developing others	.153**	.117**	.146**	.070	.109*	.183**	.066	.122**
<b>Leadership &amp; Building Bonds</b>	.078	.023	.084	.063	.007	.141**	.011*	.059
Influence & Change Catalyst	.132**	.098*	.098*	.149**	.078	.197**	.159**	.111*
Communication & Conflict Management	.046	.079	0.43	.129**	.104	.099*	.113*	.069
<b>Teamwork &amp; Collaboration</b>	.081	-.025	.121**	.011	-.009	.123**	.087	.057

## CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that although determinates of EI are being felt in all the overall essence of EI needs to be advocated. One way of doing this is to encourage teamwork and synergy. The overall essence of self-awareness was to make employees understand themselves and manage their feelings. Such an understanding will ensure that they became decisive and have the ability to make sound decision while at the workplace. According to the findings of the study, employee's self-management can be recognized by their ability to take responsibility for personal performance, which ultimately leads to work commitment. It is therefore concluded that EI should be seen as a central focus on employee performance, requiring them to set the standards for progression and moral support and actively involved in decision-making. Social awareness was also identified as being a key component in influencing employee performance. The findings identified that people with such capability are attentive to cues and listen well to work issues. Relationship management was identified as the best avenue for nurturing employee collaboration among other employees since people with such competences had a balanced focus on task with attention to relationships; they promote a friendly, cooperative climate, share information and resources and they create group synergy in pursuing collective goals.

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